

BUILDING E-LEARNING STRATEGY AND DEVELOPING E-LEARNING ACTION PLAN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gerardus Polla

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Sciences and Technology, Binus University
Jl. KH. Syahdan No. 9, Palmerah, Jakarta Barat 11480.
gerardp@binus.edu

ABSTRACT

Building an e-learning strategy and developing e-learning action plan requires two fundamental things: first is adequate knowledge about what you want to accomplish, and the second is a willingness to articulate your plan in a meaningful way to all your stakeholders. Before the work begins, identify the key stakeholders who should participate in the strategy development. This paper intends to enlighten how to build an e-learning strategy in higher education with some strategies that must be considered, such as defining who should participate; analyzing the current situation; setting visions; stating mission; analyzing gap; conducting force-field and SWOT analysis; creating strategy recommendations; and building an action plan. Additionally, this paper describes some steps for developing an e-learning action plan in higher education.

Keywords : *Building E-learning strategy, developing E-learning action plan.*

ABSTRAK

Membangun strategi e-learning dan pengembangan e-learning action plan membutuhkan dua hal mendasar: pertama pengetahuan yang cukup tentang apa yang ingin Anda capai, dan kedua: kemauan untuk mengartikulasikan rencana Anda dalam cara yang bermakna untuk semua pemangku kepentingan Anda. Sebelum pembangunan ini dimulai, stakeholder kunci yang harus berpartisipasi dalam pengembangan strategi diidentifikasi. Makalah ini bermaksud untuk menginformasikan bagaimana membangun e-learning strategi Anda dalam pendidikan tinggi. Ada beberapa strategi harus dipertimbangkan seperti siapa yang harus berpartisipasi; Analisa situasi saat ini;? Menetapkan visi Anda; negara misi, analisis kesenjangan; melakukan kekuatan-lapangan dan analisis SWOT; rekomendasi strategi, dan membangun sebuah rencana aksi. Selain itu dalam makalah ini akan menjelaskan beberapa langkah untuk mengembangkan rencana aksi e-learning di pendidikan tinggi.

Kata kunci: *pembangunan e-learning strategy, pengembangan e-learning action plan.*

INTRODUCTION

The Internet has begun to radically change teaching learning process in higher education, especially to improve students' knowledge, their skills or further their general education. E-learning refers to the use of internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance. It is based on three fundamental criteria: (1) e-learning is networked, which makes it capable of instant updating, storage/retrieval, distribution and sharing of instruction or information; (2) it is delivered to the end-user via a computer using standard internet technology; (3) it focuses on the broadest view of learning which is learning solutions that go beyond the traditional training paradigms. E-Learning is not limited to the delivery of instruction.

E-learning spans distance, but the definition of 'distance' in this case is broad, including correspondence courses, or other approaches. Therefore, we can say that e-learning is a form of distance learning. However, there is no particular reason that the goal of e-learning should be to simply emulate what usually is done in the classroom. By combining a new internet technology with a new thinking of how people learn, durable e-learning strategies that actually work are beginning to merge. There are some major benefits of e-learning i.e. (1) lower cost; (2) contains timely and dependable content; (3) delivers consistent or customized messages based on needs; (4) builds community; (5) scalable; (6) universal scope, etc.

Why should we have an e-learning strategy? Because with e-learning, we introduce not only a new learning technology but also a new way to "think" about learning. Learning does not necessarily require trainings or instructions. People can learn in various ways through a well-designed information access by using new enhancing-performance tools. A lot of efforts in using learning technology are not sustainable due to the capabilities of new and promising technologies to understand the bigger illustration. Many efforts often underestimate the complexities of the interactions between e-learning and the organization, and how truly difficult it is to change people's attitudes about what learning activities are.

E-learning would be complex enough if all we wanted to do is to build and deliver high-quality training on the web. Therefore, we need to build an e-learning strategy as a foundation for e-learning itself and developing e-learning action plan in higher education. To Build an e-learning strategy, we need to know some important component i.e. who should participate; How to analyze your current situation; How to set your vision and state your mission; How to determined gap analyze; How to developing e-learning action plan. This article will give some brief descriptions about the questions above.

METHOD

There are several steps to build an e-learning strategy in higher education that will be discussed in this article, such as: (1) identify the key stakeholders about who should participate in the strategy development; (2) analyze the currents situation as it pertains to the ability to launch and sustain e-learning; (3) create a detail description of what your learning and development efforts (including e-learning) you want to be; (4) set the vision; (5) determine the gap analysis. Meanwhile, to develop an e-learning action plan in higher education, we have eight basic steps: (1) Begin with strategic finding (from your research) followed by specific recommendations; (2) Specify tactics to operationally your recommendations; (3) Identify critical success factors; (4) Set and stick to timelines and milestones; (5) Provide adequate funding for implementation; (6) Write it down; (7) Define and implement a change management plan; (8) Define and implement a communication plan.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Building an E-Learning Strategy in Higher Education

To build an e-learning strategy in higher education, we should first identify the key stakeholders about who should participate in the strategy development. Sometimes the work requires some input from a broad cross section of the training organization (training managers, developers, instructors, administrators), its client (students, organization, sponsors), and other stakeholders, especially senior managers and the IT organization (in some cases customers and outside suppliers may also play a role). These larger groups are best used to generate ideas and suggestions, as well as identify key issues, problems, or needs.

The next step is to fully analyze the current situation as it pertains to the ability to launch and sustain e-learning. Take a look at the current state of your overall learning and development efforts and the state of your e-learning initiatives. Determine how well you are aligned with goals and direction of your business. This is derived from a broad assessment of your overall costs, effectiveness, flexibility, etc., plus the value perceptions of all your stakeholders. Here are ten key questions to ask: (1) How does your business direction change and what are the causes of this change? (2) How is learning and development viewed in your business, in terms of (a) perception of what learning is; (b) learning as an integral component of work; (c) flexibility and responsiveness to changing business requirements? (3) What is the current state of e-learning in your business, in terms of (a) usage throughout organization; (b) value perception by key stakeholders; (c) sophistication of both the technology and the approach; (d) perceived or actual level of success or failure with previous projects, including reactions from users/learners? (4) What is the current state of the technology (inter/intranet) infrastructure in your business? (5) What is the current level of funding for e-learning? Is it adequate or inadequate? (6) How are learning efforts evaluated in the business? (7) What is the current state of your internal e-learning talent? (8) How coordinated are your e-learning efforts? (9) Is there redundancy or process gaps? (10) How is e-learning currently accessed in your business? (11) Are e-learning initiatives, expertise, and funding evenly distributed across your organization or concentrated in a few places?

Now, create a detail description of what your learning and development efforts (including e-learning) you want to be. This is derived from the goals and mission of your business and an assessment of its future needs, plus input from all stakeholders. (1) What is the mission and what are the goals of your business? Where is your business going? (2) What should be the role for learning and development in your business? (3) What are your competitors doing in the areas of learning & development, and e-learning? (4) What are the best practices in learning and development, and e-learning, those are appropriate for your business situation? (5) What should be your e-learning value proposition? (6) What is the business rationale for e-learning? (7) What is your vision for how you want to be viewed and valued in the future (five years)? (8) What is the mission for learning and development in your business? (9) How does e-learning play into that mission? (10) What principles are most important to you in guiding how you will implement your mission and realize your vision? (11) How will your mission, vision, and guiding principles manifest themselves in (a) your position in the business; (b) how learning and e-learning are defined; (c) your organizational structure; (d) the support you receive from the top; (e) the stability of funding; (f) your ability to recruit or develop the right talent; (g) how you and the business define learning and e-learning.

After that, we need to set our vision. A vision statement describes a future state as it happens at the present. Vision statements are usually developed through some sort of consensus-building activity, followed by refinements by senior managers. They reflect a future ideal state. Besides, we

need to state our mission, too. Once you have agreed the visions, go developing mission statements that encapsulate your goal. Mission statements are usually developed by senior managers and then tested/refined with stakeholders (who should be solicited for their initial ideas first). They reflect the direction to where the organization must go on in order to realize its vision. With the vision and mission in hand, you are ready to build your e-learning strategy. However, bear in mind that as you build your strategy, your vision and mission may change, based on the data you uncover and the various forces (people, technology, business, financial, etc.) that are and support your effort.

Continuing to the next step of building an e-learning, we need to determine our gap analysis. Create detailed specification of the key disparities between the current and desired situation as well as associated descriptions of root causes (not symptoms). Conduct force-field and SWOT analysis. There are two good analytical techniques that can be used to look more closely at strategy issues and decisions. The first is a force-field analysis that can be conducted for each gap statements. Verify your gap analysis with stakeholders. A swot analysis looks at the entire organization to determine its *strengths*, *weaknesses*, *opportunities*, and *threats*, either at the moment or at some future point in time. *Strengths* signify what you're good at, reflecting a high level of competence and support to identify how the strengths of the company support the training or learning effort. *Weaknesses* also look inwards at areas that are under performing or nonexistent, that pose risks to the organization. *Opportunities* highlight the areas where progress could be made if the strengths are accentuated and the weaknesses diminished. *Threats* highlight the consequences if the opportunities that are not seen when the organization's weaknesses overwhelm its strengths. Threats also detail what might happen when nothing is done. Essentially, the goal of SWOT analysis is to bring up the issues related to each of the four areas and devise strategies to accentuate and build strengths and opportunities, while at the same time reduce weaknesses and neutralize threats. Below is a sample of SWOT analysis for a training organization (Table 1).

Table 1
SWOT Analysis Sample

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-tech company with lots of tech savvy • Long tradition of training gives us lots of experience • Established intranet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long tradition of training may lock us in old paradigms. • Everybody doing their own thing. • Business not doing well at this time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to leverage our technical expertise. • By showcasing e-learning as more efficient and cost effective, may get support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to move quickly will lose windows of opportunity facing downsizing of critical talent and budget cuts. • Business units will buy from outside sources.

Developing E-learning Action Plan in Higher Education

Implement your e-learning strategy recommendations through a comprehensive action plan. The specific tactics should be described quite detailed so everyone knows what to do. The following are eight basic steps for developing your e-learning action plan.

First, let's begin with strategic finding (from your research) followed by specific recommendations. Priority recommendations. Start with the most important issues, which may be the most difficult. Eliminate challenges that you can't overcome immediately, but note which of these are true inhibiting factors.

Second, specify tactics to operationally your recommendations. Get into some detail about how you will make the strategy real, answering the typical question: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

Third, identify critical success factors. Determine what constitutes success. Seek out the input of all stakeholders—including senior leaders, front-line managers, the IT organization, learners, customers(if appropriate), and the training staff itself.

Fourth, set and stick to timelines and milestones. Get agreement from everyone about deliverables and accountabilities.

Fifth, provide adequate funding for implementation. Be sure there is sufficient capital to implement the strategy.

Sixth, write it down. Some people are satisfied when everyone comes out of a strategy discussion in agreement.

Seventh, define and implement a change management plan. Don't wait to begin helping the organization adopt the changes your e-learning strategy will bring about.

Eighth, define and implement a communication plan. Commensurate with your change management initiative, develop and implement communications design to both inform everyone about the new e-learning strategy and help people overcome their own doubts and resistance to the new approach.

CONCLUSION

Based on the method discussed above, there are four concluded points. First is that information and communication technology infrastructure are required to ease the communication among the stakeholders. IT infrastructure helps a lot of universities to work out a process related to administering students' data so that it will be able to accelerate the decision concerning those data.

Second is what is related to strategy recommendations. Based on all the work you have done to this point, you can now make specific strategic recommendation to close the gaps, implement the mission, and achieve the vision by doing the following: (1) Identify one title holder who will take up the cause at the senior level; (2) Develop an e-learning solution, may be sponsored by the title holder (that addresses a business problem) as showcase product; (3) Build an e-learning business plan focused on the issues that the senior managers believe important (even if some of them are not your issues). Third is that computers can be assistants to serve the stakeholders and they can also help the process of the learning, including all things relating to the management of e-learning process. Besides, computers can be used as a tool to search for *scattered* free knowledge in the world.

Fourth is that developing an e-learning strategy is essential in setting a direction for the organization and its circle. However, to accomplish it, it is important to be on guard for the coming issues and actions. Some people who see e-learning as a threat will discourage the strategy as impractical or unnecessary.

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